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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MOTT](#) [UY](#)
SUBJECT: URUGUAY: DAS MCMULLEN EXPLAINS U.S.-COLOMBIA
DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT TO FM FERNANDEZ AND THE
URUGUAYAN MEDIA

Classified By: CDA ROBIN MATTHEWMAN, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

Summary
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¶1. (C) WHA DAS Chris McMullen visited Montevideo August 26 to provide background and information on the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) to Foreign Minister Fernandez and to the Uruguayan public. Fernandez told him that Uruguay would do what it could to ensure the success of the August 28 UNASUR summit, defining success as the avoidance of both Colombia's isolation and lasting harm to the relationships of the heads of state attending. Fernandez noted that most UNASUR members would be happy to lower the profile of the DCA issue in the region. A draft declaration (translation below) circulated to participating foreign ministers by Argentine FM Taiana would do that by referring discussion and analysis of the DCA and possibly other military agreements to a working group within UNASUR's Defense Council. McMullen's visit made a big media splash, garnering a lot of attention for our main DCA-related points.
End Summary.

Upcoming UNASUR Meeting: Moderation Evident
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¶2. (C) McMullen began his meeting with FM Gonzalo Fernandez by explaining the context and content of the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA), with his explanation making clear that the context is more important than the content in this instance. Starting from the institutional building blocks in the U.S.-Colombia military-to-military relationship, such as the 1952 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, McMullen walked Fernandez and Ambassador Elbio Rosselli (Uruguay's Undersecretary for Political Affairs equivalent) through to the present day.

¶3. (C) McMullen emphasized that the DCA would not lead to the establishment of any U.S. base in Colombia, but rather grants us formal access to several Colombian facilities; that those facilities will remain completely under Colombian control; and that both sides agree to respect the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs. He explained that, in some respects, this agreement simply formalizes what has been close cooperation for a number of years. He noted that the most sensitive aspects of the DCA for Colombia were not the issues making headlines in the region, but instead involved matters such as the status of contractors and customs treatment of imported items. McMullen also reminded Fernandez that the tendency over the last decades in the region is for a declining U.S. military presence. Finally, McMullen asked that Uruguay help to broaden the August 28

UNASUR agenda from a sole focus on the DCA, in order to avoid Colombia's isolation at the meeting.

¶4. (C) Fernandez explained that Uruguay initially had numerous questions about the DCA, especially as the media and others characterized the agreement as paving the way for U.S. bases in Colombia. The August 6 visit to Montevideo by Colombian President Uribe put those concerns to rest, according to Fernandez, who said Uribe went into the same sort of detail as McMullen in his meeting with President Tabare Vazquez and Fernandez. Fernandez stressed that Uruguay now understands that the DCA will not lead to U.S. bases in Colombia. Still, Uruguay's longstanding policy of opposing any foreign bases in Latin America will continue, Fernandez cautioned, saying that Uruguay will support a sentence in the UNASUR summit declaration specifying opposition to foreign bases in the region. Here Fernandez pulled McMullen aside to assure him that the proposed declaration reference to "foreign bases" would apply equally to all countries, and was not directed at the U.S.

¶5. (C) Fernandez assured McMullen that Uruguay would do its best to make the Bariloche meeting a success, which he defined as the avoidance of Colombia's isolation and the avoidance of permanent damage to relations between the heads of state present. Fernandez stated that he thinks the meeting will go well, explaining his optimism by pointing out that Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and "even Ecuador" have strong reasons of their own to want a successful outcome. Fernandez then showed McMullen a fax copy of an anodyne draft declaration being circulated for comment by Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana. That declaration has UNASUR heads of state kicking the DCA issue

to a new working group to be formed within UNASUR's Defense Council, significantly lowering the issue's profile. Uruguay will support the proposal, according to Fernandez, who added that he had conversations with the foreign ministers of Bolivia, Argentina, and Colombia, with each agreeing support. (Note: McMullen passed a copy of the draft declaration electronically August 26 to PDAS Kelly. An informal translation follows in paragraph (8). End Note.)

But Concerns Remain
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¶6. (C) Rosselli warned that there still exists the possibility that the August 28 meeting could go off the rails, even with so many countries invested in its success. Chavez will continue with his shrill anti-U.S. rhetoric, Rosselli said, but that is expected. Rosselli told McMullen that Brazil's tack is still uncertain, as that country has legitimate concerns attendant with the DCA. For instance, Rosselli said, the U.S. must consider how a strengthening of Colombian military capabilities might trigger the unintended result of directing a flood of Colombians, combatants and non-combatants alike, into Brazil. Rosselli concluded by saying the U.S. will have to calm Brazil in order to assure a positive meeting result. McMullen explained that he had just come from good meetings in Brazil, and that the U.S. understands and respects Brazil's concerns.

Visit Draws Significant Media Attention
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¶7. (C) McMullen's visit became a major media event. In a scheduled interview with leading-circulation daily El Pais and during a press availability subsequent to his meeting with Fernandez and attended by all major media present in Montevideo, McMullen drove home his key messages. Those messages were reported fairly faithfully, with particular outlets adding whatever slant for which they are known locally. McMullen was the story of the day, and a full analysis of the visit's (likely considerable) public impact is reported septel.

Informal Translation of Draft Declaration

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¶8. (SBU) The following is an informal translation of the text of the draft declaration circulated to UNASUR foreign ministers by Argentine FM Taiana. Begin text:

Bariloche Declaration on Measures of Mutual Confidence in Military Cooperation Matters

The Chiefs of State and Government of the South American Union of Nations (UNASUR) in the extraordinary meeting held on August 28, 2009 in San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina,

Reaffirming the principles established in the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty signed on May 23, 2008 in Brasilia;

Reiterating the common objective of strengthening South America as an area of peace, foundation for the integrated development of our peoples and the preservation of our natural resources;

Ratifying, in particular, the vocation of UNASUR to promote dialogue and consensus in defense matters through the promotion of measures of confidence and transparency;

Reiterating their strong determination to promote peace and the peaceful solution of controversies, respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of states in an unrestrictive manner;

Decide:

¶1. To request the South American Defense Council of UNASUR, in its capacity as consulting, cooperation and coordination body in defense matters, to analyze and propose to the Chiefs of State specific measures to promote confidence and transparency in military cooperation and assistance matters that should be observed by UNASUR members in the framework of their national policies and agreements with extra-regional countries.

¶2. To this end, they set up a working group in accordance

with the provisions of article 10 of the Council Regulations, which is to make its recommendations and proposals within sixty (60) days from the date of this declaration.

End Text.
Matthewman